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NSC BRIEFING

9 March 1960

JAPAN-SOUTH KOREA

I. Another critical impasse in Japanese-South Korean relations has developed from Rhee government's continued refusal to return Japanese fishermen seized on the high seas and/being held as political hostages.

A. Seoul now detaining 214 fishermen, including 167 who have completed prison terms for violating Rhee Line (at one point 230 miles off South Korean coast).

B. All Japanese political parties and politically powerful fishing interests are demanding Prime Minister Kishi take retaliatory measures against South Korea. Public opinion mounting rapidly on issue.

C. After eight years of seizures, Japanese patience wearing thin

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1. Since 1952, about 3,300 [] fishermen been detained and sentenced. In 1958, under pressure from US, over 3,000 released--present group been seized and held since then.

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2. Total of 260 fishing boats been taken and resold to Koreans.

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25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

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- III. President Rhee's intense hatred of Japan is primary obstacle to a settlement of the many differences between the two countries. He stated publicly in October 1959 that Japan was Korea's number one enemy, Communism number two.
- A. Rhee demands that Japan pay huge sums to compensate Korea for 40 years of occupation, return Korean art treasures, grant a preferred status to some 600,000 Korean residents in Japan and not fish in waters inside the Rhee Line.
 - B. The Rhee government holds Japanese fishermen as a political lever to force concessions from the Japanese in the negotiations for an overall settlement.
 - C. Recently Korean ambassador Yiu in Tokyo led the Japanese to believe Seoul would release Japanese fishermen who had completed their sentences if Japan would buy 30,000 tons of Korean rice Japan doesn't want; Tokyo now willing to make the deal but believes Koreans will attach new conditions.
- IV. Even if this problem of detained fishermen settled, bickering and recurring crises may be expected as long as Rhee lives.